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Recorded Vol. 36, Page 281)

(N. 268)

















Infant Baptism.

# INFANT BAPTISM

AN

## ORDINANCE OF THE GOSPEL.

BY REV. JOTHAM SEWALL.

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NOTE.—The following essay is the substance of four sermons prepared and preached to the people of my present charge, and also to a neighboring church. Some of the hearers expressed a wish that they should be given to the public through the press; and I have been disposed to comply with this wish, especially as some points connected with the subject, which tend to illustrate it, are not presented in other treatises of the kind. And should this humble effort be the means of confirming the faith of any of the people of God in an important truth, and of stimulating them to a more faithful discharge of parental duties, the labor involved will be abundantly repaid.

J. SEWALL.

NORTH GRANVILLE, N. Y., March 28, 1859.



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# INFANT BAPTISM.

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## CHAPTER I.

CHURCH DEFINED. — JEWISH CHURCH FORMED. —  
LIMITED. — JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN CHURCH THE  
SAME.

AN important feature of the government of God is placed before us in the passage, "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them." (Psalms 103: 17-18.) On the principle here expressed, an institution was founded, under th<sup>u</sup> former dispensation, in

which, by a religious rite, children were consecrated to God. And the same principle, under the present, involves the propriety and duty of a similar consecration in a solemn religious ordinance.

In our view, Infant Baptism occupies a place in the system of God's mercy to men, which invests it with unspeakable importance; and the best good of the church and the world, we think, requires that it be understood and appreciated. Christians, we know, who are equally pious and conscientious in their opinions, may differ on this subject. We love our brethren who dissent from us respecting it. We cheerfully accord to them the right of private judgment. It is man's inalienable birthright, — an unquestionable attribute of intelligent existence. And should these pages fall under the eye of any such, — or any who have doubted whether infant baptism is an or-

dinance of the gospel, — they are requested kindly and cordially to weigh what may now be offered. Possibly, there are views of the subject which they have not taken, or facts and arguments possessing greater importance than they have supposed. Truth and duty lie on one side or the other of the question now to be considered; and it is certainly important to understand which.

The common belief of those who reject the doctrine of infant baptism, is, that the Christian church was instituted and organized at the commencement of the present dispensation, and that, hence, all its ordinances are to be found in positive New Testament enactments. If they are right in the premises, they are undoubtedly right in the conclusion. But, in our view, they are wrong in the premises, and hence the conclusion is erroneous.

The point, then, which first demands our

attention is, Is the Christian church a continuation of the Jewish church? This question deserves full and careful attention; for, in fact, it is the hinge on which the whole argument turns.

We here take the affirmative, which we think capable of being sustained beyond successful contradiction. But before exhibiting the proofs, it is proper to raise and briefly answer the question, *What is a church?*

We answer: *A church is a company of persons whom God takes into covenant with himself, as his professed servants and worshippers, securing to them certain privileges and blessings.* This was the idea under the former dispensation. Such a community was instituted in the family of Abraham. He was required to separate himself from the world, and be a worshipper and servant of Jehovah. Religious institutions

were to be observed by him and his household, and on condition of obedience, certain privileges and blessings were secured to him, some of which were temporal, but the more important of which were spiritual. In process of time, a code of laws was given to his descendants for the regulation of their civil and religious affairs; a regular priesthood was instituted; and a system of religious instruction, and more of set and outward formality in religious ordinances and worship, was introduced. When these laws were propounded to them from Sinai, they said, "All that the Lord hath said will we do." (Ex. 19: 8.) To render their engagement to be the Lord's still more formal and solemn, Moses wrote the law and ordinances which they had received on Sinai in a book, which was termed "the book of the covenant." This he read in the audience of the people, and

they replied, "All that the Lord hath spoken will we do, and be obedient." To seal this solemn engagement, "Moses took the blood [of sacrifices which had been offered] and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words." (Ex. 24: 5-8.) Here was a solemn engagement by which the nation became the professed servants and worshippers of Jehovah. And, toward the close of Moses' life, when a strict adherence to the divine commands and ordinances was enjoined, he said, "This day the Lord thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes and judgments; thou shalt therefore keep and do them with all thy heart and with all thy soul." He then added, "Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his command-

ments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice ; and the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep all his commandments." (Deut. 26 : 16-18.)

These transactions constituted the people of Israel a church, — an organized body of professed servants and worshippers of Jehovah. And so they are styled in the New Testament. Stephen says of Moses, " This is he that was *in the church* in the wilderness." (Acts 7 : 38.) And Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews, quotes David, in one of the Psalms, as saying, " I will declare thy name unto my brethren ; in the midst of *the church* will I sing praise unto thee." (Hebr. 2 : 12.) And this church, collectively and individually, in view of the relation into which God had thus taken it to himself, was required to be holy, — as really so as

the church under the Christian dispensation :— “ Sanctify yourselves, therefore, and be ye holy ; for I am the Lord your God.” — “ Ye shall be holy ; for I the Lord your God am holy.” (Lev. 20 : 7. 19 : 2.)

But, advancing from this point in the history of Israel, to avoid an error, we must distinguish between the church and the nation. By surrounding communities, the nation, as a whole, were regarded as worshippers of Jehovah (just as Christian nations are regarded by heathen as made up of Christians) ; but nothing is more evident from their history, than that, for the greater part of the time, most of them were not.

From the transactions of God with Abraham, and with his descendents at Sinai, it is obvious, that to have been strictly a member of the Jewish church, one must not only have been circumcised, but have professed to be a worshipper of God, and obedient to his re-



quirements. If an Israelite was not circumcised, he had broken God's covenant, — that is, was not in covenant with God; was not a member of the church. If, having been circumcised, he became an idolater, he was not a worshipper of Jehovah, and hence was not a member of the church; and for his idolatry he was required to be put to death. In completing their national and religious arrangements, certain feasts and other observances were instituted, in which they were to profess their adherence to the worship and service of God. (See Ex. 34: 18–23, and Deut. 26: 1–15.) Those who neglected these were not worshippers of Jehovah, and, strictly speaking, were not members of the church; they did not belong to the company of God's professed people. True, the civil and ecclesiastical laws and institutions of the nation were interwoven with each other, and hence the church and

the nation were intimately connected, — more so, probably, than in any civil community since. Still, a portion of the people were worshippers of Jehovah, and cleaved to his ordinances, and another portion were not. The former were, in reality, the church; the latter did not strictly belong to it. Hence Paul says, “They are not all Israel which are of Israel; neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children.” (Rom. 9: 6, 7.) The church was in the nation; but there were only a few points in its history in which it embraced the nation generally. A few remarks hereafter to be made, will further illustrate this point.

Now it is easy to conceive that the same body, regulated by the same general principles, but with ordinances and rites accommodated to materially different circumstances, may exist under different dispensations.

This, we maintain, is the fact. The church, under both dispensations, is the same. This is evident, —

1. *From the language of prophecy.* — The predictions which I shall here introduce, are only a few of the many which might be cited.

In the forty-fourth and forty-fifth chapters of Isaiah, the restoration of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity is foretold, and the prediction asserts, “But Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation : ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.” (45 : 17.) This could not apply to Israel as a nation, because, as a nation, they have been confounded and ashamed. It must therefore apply to them as a church ; that is, to the church in the nation. And it is a solemn assurance that the Israelitish church should never be rejected or destroyed. In the fiftieth and fifty-

first chapters, the prophet is addressing explicitly the people of Israel: "Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement." — "Look unto Abraham your father, and to Sarah that bare you." Continuing his address, but referring undeniably to gospel times, he thus commences the fifty-second chapter: "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean," — an evident prediction, not of the ceasing or destruction of the Jewish church when Messiah came, but of its being purified and continued. In the fifty-fourth chapter, personifying Israel as a desolate woman, the prophet says, "For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God. For a small mo-

ment I have forsaken thee; but in great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy upon thee, saith the Lord, thy Redeemer.” Mark what follows: *“For this is as the waters of Noah unto me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I will not be wroth with thee nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall THE COVENANT OF MY PEACE BE REMOVED, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.”* God was wroth with the nation and rebuked it. He utterly rooted it up, and destroyed it, and scattered its remaining elements to the four winds. This assurance, then, applies to the church. For a time, before the coming of Christ, God hid his face from it. But its perpetu-

ity and prosperity he here secured with an oath. In the fifty-sixth chapter, referring to gospel times, the prophet says, "The Lord God, which gathereth the outcasts of Israel, saith, Yet will I gather others to him, besides those that are gathered unto him;" — a plain intimation of the continuance of the Jewish church, and that the Gentiles were to be gathered into it. In the latter part of the fifty-ninth chapter, the prophet predicts the coming of Christ: "The Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob." He then breaks out, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." A body then existing, surely, was addressed; and if any think that it was the nation and not the church, let them notice what follows: "But the Lord shall rise upon *thee*, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy

light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about and see, *they come to thee*; thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, and the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee. — And the sons of strangers shall build thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favor have I had mercy on thee. — Therefore thy gates shall not be shut day or night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought.” All this, as it cannot apply to the nation, must apply to the church. And a few verses onward it is said, “Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, *I will make thee*

*an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations."* And then again; "*For the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.*" — No language could more plainly teach that the Jewish church was to be continued under the Christian dispensation.

Other similar predictions could be collected in great numbers from this book; but I will introduce only one more. In the sixty-second chapter, the prophet, looking forward to the new dispensation, predicts that the church of God should be called by a new name. And then, further on, he says, "Go through, go through the gates, prepare ye the way of the people [those, who, from other nations, were to come into the church], cast up, cast up the high way; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people. Behold *thy salvation cometh* [He who should save the Jewish church]; behold his reward is with



him, and his work before him. And thou [the Jewish church addressed — thou] shalt be called, *Sought out, a city not forsaken.*"

It would be easy to add other similar predictions from Jeremiah and the shorter prophets. But these are sufficient. And they certainly show that the Jewish church was not rejected at the coming of Christ and a new one formed.

2. The same appears *from the work which Christ is represented as performing for that church.* The natural meaning of the figure which his forerunner applied to him, when he said, "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor," is, the cleansing of the Jewish church; not its destruction. Isaiah, predicting the coming of Christ in the passage, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given," represents the Messiah as sitting "*upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom,* to order it, and to

establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth and forever" (Isa. 9: 7), — meaning, evidently, that he was to defend and perpetuate the Jewish church. In the fifteenth chapter of the Acts, the apostle James, before the first Christian council, speaking of the calling of the Gentiles into the church, and referring to a prophecy of Amos, says, "And to this agree the words of the prophet; as it is written, After this I will return, *and I will build again the tabernacle of David* which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up; that the residue of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord who doeth these things." The work which Christ performed by extending the blessings of salvation to the Gentiles, and gathering them into the church, is here called, a *building again of the tabernacle of David* — a

figure obviously meaning the revivifying and enlargement of the Jewish church:— and it seems to be introduced purposely to guard us against the error that he intended to destroy that church and constitute another. Said Christ to the Scribes and Pharisees, “Other sheep I have which are not of *this fold*; them also must I bring; and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd.” (John 10: 16.) Christ was here speaking of his true church, which, as we have seen, had existed in the Jewish nation. And he teaches us that the work which he came to perform, was, to gather the Gentiles into it. Said Paul to the Ephesian Christians: “Wherefore remember, that ye, being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise:— but now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometime

were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ." The obvious import of this passage is, that the converts at Ephesus, by becoming Christians, had been introduced into the Jewish church, and had become partakers of the blessings covenanted to them. And as the result of his reasoning on this topic, within a few verses, the apostle comes to this conclusion: "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone"; — language which strongly implies the unity of the church under both dispensations. The same idea was evidently before the apostle's mind, when, in the next chapter, he says, "That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel."

They were to be fellow heirs with some previously existing body to which God had covenanted blessings capable of being inherited, and were to be partakers in Christ by the gospel of the promises made to that body : and we have already seen with whom the covenant constituting a church was formed.

The work, then, which Christ came to perform for the Jewish church was, to purify and enlarge it, and bring the Gentiles into it.

3. The continuance of the Jewish church appears *from the action of the apostolical council at Jerusalem*, as recorded in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts. That council was called to decide on the question whether the Gentile converts should be circumcised, and keep the ritual law. After free discussion, in which there was some variance of opinion, the negative of the question was unanimously sustained.

Now what was the argument by which that conclusion was reached? Was it that the Jewish church, with all its rites and ceremonies, had been abolished, and a new church established in its stead? If Christ had given such instructions, his disciples must have known it. And here was the time, and this the place, to bring out the fact. This would have covered the whole ground, and settled the question at once. But not a hint of the kind appears. Not the slightest intimation was given that it was the will of Christ that the old church should be regarded as abolished, and a new one formed. The inference is plain: no such thing had been done. Had the fact been otherwise, the calling of that council would have been needless. The apostles might and would have said to the churches they formed, " You have nothing to do with the old establishment; it is all done away;

its rites and observances have ceased ; and you are on an entirely new foundation." All trouble had thus been spared.

4. *The continuance of the Jewish church was evidently the argument of Paul in the eleventh of Romans.* He begins with the inquiry, "Hath God cast away his people?" [the Jews.] This he answers with an emphatic negative: "God forbid." He then proceeds to illustrate the truth thus announced. Blindness in part had happened to Israel; they had stumbled and fallen: and, in consequence of this, salvation had come to the Gentiles. The persons thus rejected, he represented as branches broken off from an olive-tree, and the believing Gentiles as engrafted in their stead. Now what did he mean by "the good olive-tree?" Not, surely, the Jewish nation; for, becoming Christians did not incorporate the Gentiles with that. The church, as existing under

the Jewish dispensation, was evidently intended. From this, the *pious* Jews were not broken off: and among them, the believing Gentiles were grafted in, and partook “of the root and fatness of the olive-tree”—because “Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise,” and inheritors of the spiritual privileges and blessings covenanted to him and his posterity. This is obviously the meaning of the passage.

Should any pretend that the good olive-tree is Christ, this equally proves the identity of the church under both dispensations, since the members of both are represented as being in him. The truly pious are never, in any age of the world, broken off from Christ. It is only those who are nominally such. And those whom the apostle represents as being broken off were nominally in Christ by being nominally in the church. But being nominally in Christ now, is being



nominally in the church. On this ground, then, the church is the same under both dispensations, since the same thing constituted membership in the one as in the other.

These are a few of the arguments which prove that the Christian church is a continuation of the Jewish church. I see not how the force of them can be evaded. I see not, indeed, how any one, with this question before him, can read attentively the book of Isaiah, and believe otherwise. Christ, as man, was a member of that church. He was "made under the law" (Gal. 4: 4); and "was a minister of the circumcision." (Rom. 15: 8.) He submitted to the ordinances of that church; and endorsed its validity. To the multitude and his disciples he said: "The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do." (Matt. 23: 2, 3.) There were in it, when he came, some

living members, who “walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless,” and “waited for the consolation of Israel.” Christ came, as we have seen, to enlarge and beautify it. The object of his “being made a curse for us,” as Paul expressly declares, was, “that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through” him. And here we see how it was that Abraham became “the father of all them that believe.” It was not because he was the first believer; for he was not. It was not because he was a more eminent saint than such men as Enoch and Elijah; for we have no reason to regard him as such. It was because he was constituted the head of the visible church. It was because the covenant was made with him which constituted the first regularly organized community of God’s worshippers, from which all others are derived. “He received the sign

of circumcision," (says Paul,) — "that he might be the father of all them that believe," both of Jews and Gentiles; — that is, the head of the visible church. (Rom. 4: 11.)

Let the truth which has now been before us be a fixed fact in our minds. And let us accustom ourselves to feel and speak of the Jewish church with respect. It was God's church; one which he loved; and for the sake of which he reproved kings; and of which he said, "Every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn." (Isa. 54: 17.) It was never, as some have styled it, a *legal* church. A legal church among those who have sinned is an impossibility. The Israelites were no more expected to acquire merit before God by religious and other observances, than any person or community now is. The religion of a sinner, to be acceptable to God, in any age of the world, must embrace the same

elements. And happy will it be for us, if a portion of the piety and grace which adorned the worthies of the Jewish church is ours.

## CHAPTER II.

THE CHARTER OF THE CHURCH. — THIS SEALED.

— THE SEAL CHANGED.

THE church, as we have defined it, is *a company of persons whom God takes into covenant with himself, as his professed servants and worshippers, and to whom he stipulates certain privileges and blessings.* — The covenant which God made with Abraham, by which a church was instituted in his family, is therefore the charter of that church's rights. It specifies what he and the church thus formed might expect from God by virtue of that transaction.

It is, then, an important inquiry (and the more so, since, as we have seen, the church under both dispensations is the same), *What*

*blessings did God promise to Abraham? What was embraced in the charter of rights given to the church which was organized among his descendants?*

The engagement with Abraham included some temporal things; — such as a numerous posterity, the possession of the land of Canaan by his posterity, and outward national prosperity on condition of adhering to the divine commands. But the more important were spiritual blessings. The first recorded specification, which was made when he was called to leave his native country, was, that he should be a blessing, and that in him all the families of the earth should be blessed. (Gen. 12: 2, 3.) This was a promise of all that grace and favor to him and his posterity by which this should be accomplished. Some twenty-five years afterward, a more formal and solemn engagement was made. “And — the Lord

appeared unto Abraham, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk thou before me, and be thou perfect — and I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.” (Gen. 17: 1, 7.) This covenant was then sealed by the institution and performance of the rite of circumcision. And of this God said, “it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you” (v. 11). — Afterward God promised him, “In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 22: 18); referring, as an apostle informs us, specifically to Christ; and meaning that he should come in the line of Abraham’s posterity, and that through him, and the church, of which he is the head and the representative, the world should be blessed.

But the point at which the covenant was

formally announced and sealed, embodies the grand transaction. All other things were virtually embraced in this, and were only specified as defining some of its particulars.

When God thus solemnly engaged to Abraham, "I will be a God to thee;" less cannot be meant than that God would be his spiritual father and friend, and fulfil the high import of that sacred relation by imparting to him all needful protection, and bestowing upon him all needful grace, for time and eternity. The promise was an assurance of his acceptance with God as a penitent believer. Hence an apostle says, "He received the seal of circumcision, *a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised.*" (Rom. 4: 11.) And the promise made to him in behalf of his children was the same as that made to himself. The same language was used; and



no intimation is given that it is employed in an inferior sense. And, indeed, the holy man would have felt it to be a mockery of his highest desires to have temporal blessings only engaged to his children and posterity, while spiritual blessings were engaged to himself. This could not be ; because, as the covenant secured the existence of the church among his descendants, it secured the existence of piety ; for, where the church is, there piety must be. The promise, “ I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant ; to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee,” was an engagement that they should be brought into the same relation to God in which himself stood. It was a promise of the bestowment upon them of saving grace. It could mean nothing less than this. Here, indeed, a condition was involved.

Abraham must be faithful. He must be simply and sincerely devoted to God. He must be a priest of Jehovah in his house, maintaining the worship of God in it, and governing his household aright, and instructing them in the things of God. And in proportion to his fidelity in these respects might he claim the fulfilment of the promise to his children, in its high spiritual meaning; and through them to succeeding generations. It was a promise that God would bless his efforts, by the bestowment of saving grace upon his offspring, and so downward in the line of his posterity. And hence we hear God saying of Abraham, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the right way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." (Gen. 18 : 19.) Such was the

charter of privileges given to the Jewish church.

Another question here arises: *Was this charter revoked or altered at the commencement of the Christian dispensation?* — The fact, already proved, that the church remains the same, is, in itself, presumptive evidence that the charter is not annulled; for, the annulling or withdrawing of a charter, unless a new one is given, dissolves the body which it had created. But, has it ceased to be a law of God's moral administration, through Christ and the church to bless the world? Is it no longer a fact, that God blesses children through their parents? Is not the truth written on every page of the church's history, that the prayers, instructions, and example of pious parents are one of his chosen instrumentalities for the conversion and salvation of their offspring? As well may we expect the laws of nature to cease

as that principle to cease, which has run through the whole of God's moral government of the world, which he expressed to Abraham in the points before us, and which, through him, he solemnly covenanted to the church.

But perhaps it is here said, The Jewish ceremonial law is abolished, and with it went the Abrahamic covenant; — all these Old Testament transactions were swept away. Has the law of the *ten commandments*, then, become null and void? And how came Paul to say that “Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to *confirm the promises made unto the fathers?*” and that “*all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him, Amen*, to the glory of God by us?” (Rom. 15: 8, and 2 Cor. 1: 20.) The ceremonial law, indeed, has ceased; but the covenant with Abraham formed no part of that law. The promise that Christ should

come and bless the world, surely, was no part of it. None of the promises made to Abraham were any part of it. They were as distinct from it as any transaction could possibly be. So the apostle reasons in the third chapter of Galatians. "Brethren, I speak after the manner of men: Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth or addeth thereunto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant which was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect." The reasoning of the apostle is, that the law, which was given at Sinai 430 years after the covenant made with Abraham, was an entirely distinct thing, and

did not, in the least, affect it. That covenant was confirmed by God in Christ; and, according to the apostle's showing, being thus established, could not be disannulled. It was God's covenant, and hence unspeakably more firm and less mutable than any human engagement. "The law," he says, "was added because of transgression, *till the seed should come* to whom the promise was made." (v. 19.) It was added [appended] to the promises made to Abraham till Christ should come; and then the ceremonial part of it was to be taken away. The ceremonial law was the "hand-writing of ordinances" which Christ blotted out and took away by nailing it to his cross. (Col. 2: 14.) It "was added" and "taken away," leaving the Abrahamic covenant just as it was. That covenant, in all the fulness of its promises, is still the rich inheritance of the church. It was never God's design,

under the Christian dispensation, to abridge the privileges of his people. The very idea, that, under a better economy, these were to be diminished, is preposterous. Christ did not abolish one of the promises made unto the fathers. He came to confirm and fulfil them — to fulfil some of them in his own person, and others in the bestowments of his spirit and grace. And the apostle, at the commencement of his argument in the third of Galatians, is careful to assure us that the object of Christ's death was, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles. Christ, he says, "was made a curse for us — that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; — that we might receive the promise of the spirit by faith." Justification by faith, and the Spirit to effect all the blessings, personal and relative, promised to Abraham, are here announced as coming on the Gentiles through

Christ; and the design of his death was to secure this effect. And hence the conclusion to which the argument of the apostle conducts him: "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise:" — "heirs" — inheritors of the blessings covenanted to him. The charter of the church, then, remains unchanged.

It has been already remarked that the covenant with Abraham was sealed by the instituting of circumcision. This ordinance was commanded to be strictly observed by all his descendants. And so important did God regard this seal, that he threatened the delinquent with being "cut off from among his people." (Gen. 17: 14.)

But why did God affix a seal to his covenant with Abraham? and why did he consider it so important that its neglect should incur the forfeiture of the subject's life? — for such is probably the meaning of the



threatening. (See Ex. 31: 14.) God's word of promise, surely, needs no additional security. His veracity is not to be doubted. The seal was intended to meet an infirmity of humanity — to confirm to men God's fidelity to his engagements, and remind them of implied obligations and duties. God knew man's proneness to forget. Even Abraham needed to have his faith in the divine promises strengthened. And his posterity would need to be reminded of the solemn transactions between God and their progenitor; and of the relation into which they were brought to God, and of what he consequently expected of them. This would tend to secure them to his service; to reclaim them when they wandered; and to inspire them with confidence in his promises in seasons of calamity and trial. It was given to Abraham for the same reason that a token was given to Noah and the post-

diluvian world, that a flood should not again destroy the earth. It was given on the same principle, that, under the Jewish dispensation, types prefigured blessings to come ; and, under the Christian, ordinances are remembrances and seals of blessings bestowed. Every outward institution is intended to meet some necessity of our nature : and such memorials will be requisite while that nature remains what it has been, and what it is.

If, then, the covenant with Abraham — the great charter of the church's rights — remains, a seal is to be expected. It would be preposterous to suppose that a covenant, once sealed, and ~~st~~ill in force, has had its seal removed. When the testimony of validity is removed from an instrument, it becomes void. Unless, therefore, God is less benevolent than he once was — less desirous of human welfare — or man has

become more observant of his Maker's will, and needs less reminding; we may be sure that his covenant has still a seal. Can we for a moment admit, that, under the Christian dispensation, faith has less to encourage and strengthen it, less to feed and live upon, than under the Jewish? Can we admit that it has a narrower range of promise, or less security for the fulfilment of divine engagements? Such a supposition would be at war with all the representations of increased advantages under the present economy. It would be little less than a libel on that dispensation itself. Or can any pretend that parents are so much more careful of the religious training of their children as to need less reminding; or that they have so much more confidence in the fulfilment of God's promises than even Abraham had, that they need no encouragement from an outward and impressive rite? Such inquiries need no replies.

But here it may be asked, If the Abrahamic covenant remains, why is not its original seal continued? I reply: The perpetuity of that covenant is unaffected by the question whether or not we can see the reason of the discontinuance of circumcision. But further; that rite, though instituted long before the giving of ceremonial law, had come to be regarded as a pledge to fulfil it. Said Paul to the Galatians, "I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law." (Gal. 5: 3.) The Judaizing teachers insisted that unless the Gentile converts were circumcised and kept the law of Moses, i. e. the ceremonial law, they could not be saved; thus subverting the very foundation principle of the gospel, justification by faith in Christ alone. Hence the sharp contention which arose respecting this question, and the calling of the council at Jerusalem

to decide it. If the Gentile converts were circumcised, they would be virtually proselyted to the Jewish religion, and be pledged to all its observances as requisite for acceptance with God. It hence became indispensable that circumcision should be laid aside. If this was not the only way in which the evil could be corrected, it was the readiest way, and the one which the Holy Ghost designated. And it should be specially noticed that this connection between circumcision and the ceremonial law was the sole ground of argument before the council at Jerusalem, and the reason on which its decision was based. The question was not, Circumcision as the seal of the Abrahamic covenant; but, *Circumcision as connected with the Jewish ceremonial law.* And if any should ask why, if that rite as a seal of the covenant had given place to another, nothing was said about the change,

we reply : That nothing was said respecting this, we do not know. But this was not the point at issue ; and, therefore, the brief result is silent respecting it. Nor was it needful to raise that question, since, as we contend, another rite had been substituted, and was generally observed.

This leads us to the next point in order : *Was the form of the seal of the Abrahamic covenant changed at the introduction of the gospel dispensation ?* — If no other reason for such a change had existed but the Saviour's foresight of the abuse to which circumcision would be subjected, this was sufficient. And, further, it is not unnatural to expect, that, with the introduction of a milder dispensation, and one suited to a more highly civilized state of the world, and with the ceasing of sacrifices when the great sacrifice which they prefigured had been offered ; all bloody rites would cease, and a

rite of similar moral significancy would take the place of circumcision. A rite of similar significance existed; and had from time immemorial. Those, who, from other nations, were proselyted to the Jewish religion, were circumcised and baptized, — males submitting to both rites, and females to the latter. The latter rite [baptism] the Saviour adopted as a token of discipleship to him, by commanding it to be applied to all who should embrace the gospel. “Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” *He thus placed baptism, as an initiatory rite, in the same relation to the Christian church in which circumcision had stood to the Jewish.* It became a necessary prerequisite to membership. And, to adult receivers, it became *precisely what circumcision was to Abraham, “a seal of the righteousness of faith”* — a seal of acceptance and justification by faith.

In emblematic significancy, circumcision and baptism are precisely similar. The typical import of circumcision is, the renewal of the heart to holiness — cleansing from moral defilement. "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked:" "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul." (Deut. 10: 16. 30: 6.) And Paul speaks of the Christians at Colosse as "circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh." The typical import of baptism is the same — the renewal of the heart to holiness — cleansing from the defilement of sin. Hence the following declarations; "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ;" — have become morally like him. (Gal. 3: 27.) "Know ye not that so



many of you as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death:" i. e. have become dead to sin. (Rom. 6: 3.) The direction of Ananias to Saul expresses the typical import of this rite: "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins." (Acts 22: 16.) Literal circumcision and literal baptism are emblems of spiritual circumcision and spiritual baptism. But in the following passage, the two latter are placed before us as being precisely similar in nature and effect: "In whom ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; buried with him by baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." (Col. 2: 11, 12.)

These two rites, then, mean the same thing; and the latter, by Christ's express

command, stands in the same relation to the Christian church in which the former did to the Jewish. But we have seen that the church is the continuation of the Jewish church. It follows, then, that by Christ's express command, baptism takes the place of circumcision. It is a token of the same covenant and a seal of the same spiritual blessings. This result has been reached by a process of reasoning which we think is legitimate and conclusive. We see not how any position we have taken can be disproved. And here we might rest the propriety of applying baptism to the children of believers. But a few additional arguments should receive attention; and some objections to the conclusion we have reached deserve to be considered.

## CHAPTER III.

TWO OBJECTIONS ANSWERED. — FURTHER ARGUMENTS. — THE CONDUCT OF CHRIST AND THE APOSTLES. — NO COMPLAINTS FROM CONVERTED JEWS. — TESTIMONY FROM HISTORY.

OUR inference from the foregoing reasoning is, that, unless a limitation has been introduced, the seal of the covenant should now be applied as extensively as under the former dispensation; i. e. to the children of God's professed people. If the covenant remains unchanged, the seal, in its new form, should be applied by the same rule as before, unless a different rule has been introduced.

Some pretend that a different rule has been given — that the doctrine of the New

Testament is, that a person must believe before he is baptized. In support of this, it is said, that the multitude on the day of Pentecost were directed: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of the Lord Jesus;" "and they that gladly received the word were baptized;" that Philip required faith in the eunuch as a prerequisite to baptism; and that Lydia, and the jailer, and Saul of Tarsus, believed before they were baptized.

All this is true; but the facts do not touch the question of Infant Baptism at all. This is easily shown. The missionaries to the Sandwich Islands, when those who had been trained in heathenism, gave evidence of piety, required every one of them to be baptized in the name of Christ. And why? Did not those missionaries believe in Infant Baptism? They certainly did. And the fact, that, for a number of years, they re-

quired all the adults who professed faith in Christ to be baptized was not, in the least, inconsistent with that belief. The reason is plain: The gospel was then just introduced; and, from the nature of the case, those persons could not have been baptized in their infancy. Just so it was in the case before us. The multitude on the day of Pentecost, the eunuch, Lydia, the jailer, Saul, and others, could not have received baptism, when young, because baptism, as a Christian rite, did not then exist: the gospel dispensation had just commenced. The facts thus adduced to disprove the propriety of applying baptism to infants are *entirely irrelevant*. They have not the most distant bearing on the question. Admit the apostles to have been the firmest believers in this doctrine, and they would have done, in all these cases, precisely as they did.

There may, indeed, be a degree of plausi-

bility in the idea of purging the church by rejecting infants from the covenant, under the pretence that retaining them tends to corrupt it by introducing unconverted members. But we deny that Infant Baptism, properly understood and practised, has any such tendency. The rite, as we shall hereafter show, does not constitute them members; and none are more watchful to admit only the converted than those who understandingly practise it. God's method of purifying the church was not to do it by reducing the number of his promises. It was never his intention to recall some of them, and give to faith a narrower scope of divine engagements, and less food and encouragement. Such an idea is utterly inconsistent with the declaration that *all* the promises are "Yea," and "Amen," in Christ, and should be at once and forever discarded.

In this place it is proper to notice another objection to the idea that baptism takes the place of circumcision. It is, that, on embracing Christianity, those who had been circumcised were required to submit to baptism. To this I reply, There was a specific meaning in baptism, over and above what was implied in circumcision. Circumcision was an acknowledgment of Jehovah as the only true God, and a profession of subjection to him as such in the character of worshippers and servants. Baptism includes all this; and is also a specific profession of discipleship to Christ. It involves a definite acknowledgment that Jesus of Nazareth is the true Messiah, a profession of faith in him as such, and a consecration to his service.\* Hence the multitude on the day of

\* Should any suppose that this remark conflicts with the application of baptism to infants, it is suf-

Pentecost were required to be baptized "*in the name of the Lord Jesus.*" The converts at Samaria also, and Cornelius, and others, are said to have been "*baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.*" Not that the name of the Trinity was not placed upon them; but that a leading and specific idea was, *a profession of discipleship to Christ.* At the introduction of the new dispensation, it was proper that the rite of initiation, while it had the same emblematic significance as the one which preceded it, should imply more, and hence be required of those who had submitted to the other. Those, generally, who had been circumcised, hated and rejected Christ. It was therefore proper, that, in a specific rite they should be required to acknowledge him

ficient to reply that the baptism of an infant is an act of the parent, and not an act of the child. It implies all this in the parent, and a consecration of his child to Christ.



as the promised Messiah, and engage allegiance to him as their rightful sovereign. This was God's method of purifying the church. By introducing a new test, he virtually broke off the unfruitful branches, and cleansed the church of unworthy members. The believing Jews submitted to Christ, and believing Gentiles were added; and thus, out of twain, upon the previous foundation, was formed a more pure and spiritual body than the previous organization had been.

I now proceed to adduce a few additional arguments in support of the sentiment that Infant Baptism is an ordinance of the gospel.

1. *Christ and his apostles taught and practised just as we should have expected, if children were still to be regarded as in covenant with their parents, and just as we should not have expected on the contrary supposition.* We should bear in mind that

Christ and his apostles belonged to a nation, who, during their whole history, had been taught to dedicate their children to God by a solemn religious rite, and this, because, with their parents, they were entitled to certain specific blessings. These facts were associated with all their ideas of true religion and the principles of the divine administration. In conformity to an express divine injunction, they had been accustomed to see Jewish children receive the token of the covenant made with their early progenitor. When any from among the Gentiles were disposed to embrace their religion, they had seen the children of such families embraced in the covenant transaction by which the parents consecrated themselves to the service of Jehovah. The practice of receiving children with their parents to the blessings of the same covenant, was rooted in their minds as among the fundamental principles of propriety and right.

Now if Christ intended to introduce a new order of things in this respect, it is obvious that much instruction would have been requisite to subdue the prejudices, and modify the opinions of his disciples, and prepare their minds for so great a change. But while he severely criticized the abuses which had crept into that dispensation, and the principles and practices of the Scribes and Pharisees, — while he spared nothing which required rebuke or censure, and while he carefully taught the disciples the spiritual nature of his kingdom; we hear him giving no such instructions, nor even hinting at the intention of a change. On the contrary, he encouraged the bringing of children to him for his blessing, and rebuked those who would have hindered the practice, and because Zaccheus himself was a son of Abraham, pronounced blessings on his family. And after seeing such things in their

Master, and being reproved by him for an unwillingness that children should be brought to him, and hearing him declare that of such were the kingdom of heaven; would the disciples be likely to infer, that, under the Christian dispensation, he intended to exclude children from the covenant with God into which their parents were brought? And would they not have waited for an order from him to inaugurate a practice exactly the opposite of that in which they had been trained? And, strong as were their Jewish prejudices, and slow as they were to relinquish the idea of a temporal kingdom, or yield any of the opinions they had cherished; would not such an order, plain and oft repeated, have been needful to induce them to regard and treat children as no longer in covenant with their parents? Would not such an order have awaked strange thoughts in their minds, and

occasioned conversation and discussion, and excited some manifestation of hostility to such an arrangement? But no such direction appears, nor even an intimation that such a change was intended; nor is there anywhere betrayed, in the intercourse of the disciples, a hint that such a direction had been received. *This is just what we should have expected of the Saviour, and thus far of the disciples, if children were still to be considered as objects of God's covenant favor; and just what we should not have expected if they were not.*

Commissioned by their Redeemer, the apostles went forth to propagate his religion. The Spirit, which had been promised to guide them into all truth, had been given. They acted under his guidance. What was their practice in relation to the point before us? To adults, they administered baptism on a profession of their faith. But

did they baptize none beside? This question must be answered by carefully examining the history of their proceedings as given us by the pen of inspiration. Paul and Silas went to Philippi, and preached. Lydia was converted. "She was baptized, and her household." But nothing is said of the *conversion* of its members. This, had it taken place, and almost simultaneously with her own, would have been a remarkable occurrence, and far more worthy of being noted, than the circumstance of their baptism. When it is said that the Lord opened *her* heart, why is it not added, "and the hearts of her household," if, indeed, the fact occurred? This is not said. But it is said that they were baptized. Why the record of the less to the omission of the greater? Is it assumed that their conversion is implied in the fact of their baptism? This is assumption without proof. It is

begging the question at issue. It is nowhere asserted in the New Testament that *none but believers* are to be baptized. As has been before remarked, converts from the Gentiles to the Jewish church were received with their households. And if no counter order had been given, it would have been perfectly natural for Paul and Silas to receive the household of Lydia with herself. All their views of the stability of the covenant made with their fathers, would have led to this. Besides, if the whole household of Lydia was converted with herself, she would have been far more likely to rejoice in the wonderful fact, and to speak of it, than simply to refer to her own. And yet she said to the apostles, "If ye have judged *me* to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there," — strongly implying that she was the only believer in the family. If all with herself were believers,

the strongest inducement which the apostles could have had to comply with her invitation was omitted. And this is the more singular, as she had to “constrain” them before they consented. To the remark sometimes adduced as proof that all her household were believers — “And they [the apostles] went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia; and when they had seen the brethren, and comforted them, they departed,” it is sufficient to reply, No intimation is given that they saw them at the house of Lydia, much less that they belonged to her family. The meaning is simply, that they saw them before they left the city. Here, then, is a household baptized by the apostles without any evidence that any but its head was pious, and where all the evidence which the Holy Ghost has seen fit to give us goes against the idea that any but herself had received the Saviour.



In the same city, Philippi, the jailor, to whose care Paul and Silas were committed, was suddenly converted; and it is said of him that he and all his were baptized straightway. From its being said that the apostles preached "to all that were in his house," and that he "rejoiced, believing in God, with all his house," some maintain that all his household were believers. But the language in the original gives a different idea. One well qualified to judge says: "If there is any ambiguity in this English phrase, there is none in the original. It is certain from the Greek, as every one acquainted with the language must perceive, that the believing and rejoicing here spoken of, being in the *singular number*, can refer to the jailor only." (Pond on Baptism, p. 96, Edition of 1833.) — The commentator Scott says that the word for believed is *singular* — thus implying that the jailor only

believed, and that his household were baptized on the ground of his faith. Mr. Scott renders the passage thus, "He [the jailor] rejoiced through all his house, having believed in God."

Here, then, is evidence which a mind open to conviction and inquiring after truth would be slow to disregard, that two households were baptized on the faith of their heads. The very mentioning, indeed, of the baptism of households, is strong presumptive evidence that the apostles believed and practised infant baptism. The journals of missionaries who reject this doctrine may be searched in vain for such records as are here made respecting the apostles. And knowing, as my readers do, that evangelical Christians are divided on this point, were they to find, in the journal of any missionary, of whose opinion in this respect they knew nothing, such entries as these : — "A

certain woman, hearing me preach, believed, and I baptized her and her family ;” “ A man embraced the Saviour, and I baptized him and all his,” — they would not hesitate a moment on which side of the line that divides Christians on this subject to rank that missionary. Why judge differently of the apostles and of him ? Were not the apostles inspired men, whose example and practice every one wishes should correspond with his own views, the fact of their baptizing households would be deemed good reason for believing that they practised infant baptism. No one would be likely to call this in question in the case of any other, the record of whose proceedings corresponded with the record of theirs. *The account given us of the apostles is just such as we should have expected on the supposition that they practised Infant Baptism, and just such as we should not have expected if they did not practise it,*

2. *If children are not to be retained in covenant under the Christian dispensation, we should have heard loud complaints from the converted Jews.*—That the children of God's peculiar people were entitled to covenant blessings with their parents, was a fact which had run along the whole history of the Hebrew nation, and was strongly associated with the religious principles and feelings of every Jewish mind. And every one, at all acquainted with the history of that people, knows that they were peculiarly tenacious of their rites and ceremonies, and strongly opposed to innovation. Multitudes of them believed, and were brought into the Christian church. But conversion to Christianity did not free their minds from their national prejudices. It was extremely difficult for them to indulge the opinion that any change was to take place in the customs in which they had been trained. They

were "zealous of the law," and disposed to enforce its observance on the Gentile converts.

In the new order of things introduced by the gospel dispensation, had the children been stricken out from their covenant relation to God, the change to the Jews would have been great. It would have been an innovation upon their previous habits of thought and feeling to which no Jewish mind would have quietly submitted. A clamor would have been raised, and discussion would have been long and sharp; and much opposition would have been manifested, before a change could have been effected. How is it, then, that we hear not a word of such discussion? How is it that the question is not even raised? When many other things are discussed, and deviations from the ceremonial law were strenuously opposed, by the Jewish converts, how is it

that not a word is said about this? Any one who can believe that such a change could have been effected without a syllable of controversy, must be strangely ignorant of the strength of Jewish prejudices, or must strangely overlook them. 'The entire silence of the New Testament on this subject is evidence, which no unbiased mind will feel at liberty to disregard, that no such change occurred at the commencement of the Christian dispensation.

3. *History teaches that Infant Baptism was universally practised in the churches soon after the apostolic age.*—I shall trouble the reader with only a few quotations. Irenæus, who wrote about sixty-seven years after the apostles, and who was a disciple of Polycarp, the disciple of John, says, "Christ came to save all persons who by him are regenerated unto God; infants and little ones, and children and youths, and

older persons." (Wall, Vol. I. p. 25.) The fathers of that day used the term "regenerate" for "baptize" — thus putting the thing signified for that which denoted it. This was evidently the sense in which Irenæus used the word; for, in relation to Christ's command (Matt. 28: 19), he says, "When Christ gave his apostles the command of *regenerating unto God*, he said, Go teach all nations, *baptizing* them." Justin Martyr (a cotemporary with Irenæus), says of certain persons, "They are regenerated in the same way of regeneration in which we were regenerated; for they are *washed with water* in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." (Pond, p. 99.) Origen, whose father was a Christian martyr, was a very learned man, and flourished about one hundred and ten years after the apostles. He travelled quite extensively, and had the best means of knowing

the practice of the churches. He says, "According to the usage of the church, baptism is given to infants." Again he says, "Infants are baptized for the forgiveness of sins;" and again, "The church had a tradition from the apostles to give baptism to infants." (Pond, p. 102.) In the year 253, about 153 years subsequent to the apostles, a council of sixty-six bishops was convened in Carthage, with the learned Cyprian at its head, — a man, who, with many others of that day, braved the fires of persecution, and finally died a martyr to the religion of Christ. Fidus addressed a letter to that council, wishing to know whether the baptism of infants should be delayed till the eighth day, according to the law of circumcision, or might be administered at an earlier date. That council unanimously decided that it was not needful to delay it to that time. (Milner's Ch.



Hist., Vol. I. p. 320.) No question was raised whether infants should be baptized. This, it seems, no one in that venerable body doubted. The point was only, whether it was requisite to regard the law of circumcision as to the time of administering it. That council decided the question submitted to them in the negative; and the whole case shows the opinion of the fathers respecting baptism's taking the place of circumcision. Augustine, whom Milner styles "the great luminary of the century in which he lived," flourished 288 years after the apostles. (Pond, p. 106.) He says, "The whole church practises infant baptism; it was not instituted by councils, but was always in use." He also says, "That he did not remember ever to have read of any person, whether catholic or heretic, who maintained that baptism ought to be denied to infants." And further, "This the church

has always maintained." (Dwight's Theo. Vol. IV. p. 336.) Pelagius, who was a contemporary with Augustine, "was born in Britain, and had travelled through France, Italy, Africa Proper, and Egypt to Jerusalem." (Dwight.) He rejected the doctrine of original sin. Augustine urged against him the doctrine of infant baptism, inquiring why, if infants were not sinful, they were baptized. Pelagius, of course, had the strongest temptation to deny the doctrine and practice of infant baptism, if he could. But instead of this, he says, "Baptism ought to be administered to infants with the same sacramental words which are used in the case of adult persons." "Men slander me, as if I denied the sacrament of baptism to infants." "I never heard of any one, not even the most impious heretic, who denied baptism to infants." (Pond, p. 108.)

The apostles were under the special guidance of the Holy Spirit; and they practised infant baptism, or they did not. There must have been uniformity among them: and they introduced the practice in the churches they instituted; or they did not. Irenæus, the pupil of Polycarp, who had been the disciple of John, must have known what the instructions and practice of the apostles had been; and yet he testifies for infant baptism. So did Origen, Augustine, Pelagius, the council of Carthage, and others whose testimony might be introduced. These witnesses show conclusively that infant baptism was universal in the church soon after the apostolic age. If, then, the apostles did not practise it, a universal change must have taken place soon after their time. This could not have been effected without much discussion. Multitudes must have seen the innovation; and

many would have lifted their voices against it. Human nature must have been far more pliant then than now, if much warm and angry disputing had not occurred. How is it, then, that not a syllable of this reaches us on the page of history? How is it, that, when other schisms and disputes existed, and the record of them is preserved, not a word is said about this? How is it, that in a council of sixty-six learned and pious bishops, only a century and a half after the apostles, no one lifted his voice against a practice which must have been known to be against apostolic instructions and usage, if the apostles did not believe and practise infant baptism? And how is it that such men as Origen and Pelagius NEVER HEARD, not simply of any church, but of *any individual*, who denied the propriety of infant baptism? If these are reliable testimonies (and we are not aware that any

attempt has ever been made to disprove them), the inference is unavoidable, that the apostles taught and practised infant baptism.\*

I close this point of the argument by a quotation from the late learned Dr. Dwight. "A person who employed himself extensively in examining this subject, gives the following result of all his inquiries. First. During the first 400 years from the formation of the Christian church, Tertullian only urged the delay of baptism to infants, and that only in some cases; and Gregory only

\* Infant baptism has been denied to exist in the early ages of the church, and arguments have been employed to sustain the denial. The testimony of these fathers has been *ignored*; but I am not aware of any attempt to *disprove* it. It stands on the page of history; and there it will stand, an unanswerable proof of the usage of the churches which the apostles and their successors planted.

delayed it, perhaps, to his own children. But neither any society of men, nor any individual, denied the lawfulness of baptizing infants. — Secondly. In the next 700 years, there was not a society nor an individual who even pleaded for this delay ; much less any who denied the right or the duty of infant baptism. — Thirdly. In the year 1120, one sect of the Waldenses declared against the baptism of infants, because they supposed them incapable of salvation. But the main body of that people rejected the opinion as heretical ; and the sect which held it soon came to nothing. — Fourthly. The next appearance of this opinion was in the year 1522.” He adds: “Had the baptism of infants ever been discontinued by the church, or had it been introduced in any age subsequent to that of the apostles, these things could not have been, nor could the history of them been found.” (Vol. IV. p. 337.)

Let us now glance at the points which have been proved, — and proved, we think, beyond the power of successful refutation : — The Christian church is a continuation of the Jewish church ; — The charter of the church's privileges was not annulled or altered at the commencement of the Christian dispensation, — it embraced children before, and it embraces them still ; — At the change of dispensations, baptism, as the seal of the covenant, succeeded to circumcision ; — We hence need no special command to baptize infants — the command, “ Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,” since no qualification or restriction was introduced, involves the duty. We have seen that Christ and his apostles acted just as we should have expected them to act if they believed that children were still to be regarded as embraced in the covenant made with

their parents, and were to receive the seal of that covenant;— That the rejection of children would have produced loud complaints from the converted Jews, whereas not a whisper of such complaint appears ;— and, That history shows the universal practice of infant baptism in the churches soon after the apostolic age.

What more proof do we want that Infant Baptism is an ordinance of the gospel? What more can any reasonable person ask? We hope, then, to be excused from the charge of bigotry or undue positiveness while we express the feeling that the doctrine rests on the sure foundation of the word of God, and will there remain, unmoved by all the power which may be arrayed against it.



## CHAPTER IV.

RELATION OF BAPTIZED CHILDREN TO THE CHURCH. — UTILITY OF INFANT BAPTISM ; — IT TENDS TO INCREASE THE FAITHFULNESS OF PARENTS — TO SECURE TO CHILDREN THE PRAYERS AND COUNSELS OF THE CHURCH — AND TO SOOTHE THE GRIEF OCCASIONED BY THEIR DEATH.

HAVING, as we think, fairly and conclusively established the doctrine of Infant Baptism, the question naturally arises, “What is the relation of baptized children to the church?” Are they strictly and properly members, entitled to its peculiar ordinances and privileges? Since, in establishing this doctrine, we reason from the former dispensation, it may be thought

that, without any other qualification, they should come to the Lord's table. To this I reply, that analogy, which, at first sight, may be thought to lead to this conclusion, sustains the opposite. It has been already shown that the Jewish church was not strictly national, and that only at a few points in its history did it embrace the entire nation. Something more than circumcision was requisite to constitute a member of that church. A person must be — and, by his own act, he must profess to be — a worshipper of Jehovah. All Jewish males were required to attend the three great national feasts, and there present offerings to God, and worship. (See Deut. 16: 16. 26: 10.) Obedience to this requirement was a practical personal profession that one was a worshipper and servant of Jehovah. If he refused thus to do, he virtually separated himself from the company of God's worshippers, or rather,

did not join himself to it — was not in form or in fact, truly and strictly a member of that church. The passover, it will be remembered, was one of those feasts, and was forbidden to be eaten at any place except at the tabernacle or temple. The injunction was, “Thou mayest not sacrifice the passover within any of thy gates which the Lord thy God giveth thee ; but at the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place his name in, there thou shalt sacrifice the passover.” (Deut. 16 : 5, 6.) Those who did not go up to the feasts, and profess themselves the worshippers of Jehovah, were thus forbidden to eat it. The practical profession of being his worshippers must be made by going up to the feast, before the privilege could be enjoyed. — St. Luke says that Christ went up to the passover at Jerusalem, with his parents, when he was twelve years old, “after the custom of the

feast." (Luke 2: 41, 42.) And the statement of commentators, such as Calvin, Bp. Patrick, Poole, Rosenmuller, and others, is, that children at the age of twelve years were brought by their parents to the temple; and from that time, they began to eat the passover and other sacrifices. Bloomfield says: "The custom was, not to take them to the passover, until they should have attained the age of puberty, a period which the Rabbins tell us was fixed at the twelfth year, when they were held amenable to the law, and were called sons of precept. They were then also introduced into the church, initiated into its doctrines and ceremonies, and consequently were taken, with their relatives, to Jerusalem at the festivals." Dr. Gill, a learned Baptist commentator, says (on Luke 2: 42): "According to the maxims of the Jews, persons were not obliged to the duties of the law, or subject to the penalties

of it in case of non-performance, until they were, a female, at the age of twelve years and one day, and a male, at the age of thirteen years and one day." He adds, as his own comment on the passage: "They were not properly under the law until they arrived at that age; nor were they reckoned adult church-members till then, nor then neither, unless worthy persons: for so it is said, 'he that is worthy, at thirteen years of age, is called a son of the congregations,' that is, a member of the church."

We see, then, to what conclusion the argument from analogy conducts us. There is no rule which entitles baptized children to the peculiar privileges and ordinances of the church, till they publicly profess faith in Christ. They are brought only within the outer enclosure of the church, and, through the covenanted mercies of God, are peculiarly its hope.

We now proceed to another topic, — The utility of Infant Baptism. Every divinely instituted ordinance is founded upon principles of our nature which created a necessity for its existence, and render it, when rightly understood and practised, highly beneficial. This, we think, is eminently true of the ordinance we are now considering.

It is scarcely needful to premise, that an important part of the Divine plan is to perpetuate and promote religion in the world by means of parental instruction and influence. Every reader of the Bible must be aware of this. Numerous injunctions, both in the Old and New Testament, teach the important truth. The fact, too, is written upon the very constitution of our natures. In our younger years, we instinctively cherish feelings of respect toward those who surround us with the arms of parental affection

and kindness. We look to them for instruction and guidance; and our plastic natures are moulded materially by their agency upon us. The principles which they instil sink deep in our memories, and outlive many subsequent impressions. The effects of our early training remain with us, and generally do more than any other cause, and, probably, more than all other causes, to frame our characters, and point out, like the finger of an index, our future and final destinies.

The parental relation was instituted, and the affections it involves bestowed, — not that the body simply, nor yet the mind in its temporal relations, should be the chief object of solicitude and care, — but that solicitude for the welfare of the undying spirit should be cherished, and that the instruction should be given, and the influence exerted, which, with the blessing of God, will cause

the principles of holiness to spring up within, and advance in strength to the government and sanctification of the soul, and to its ultimate perfection and felicity in heaven.

And here, as in every other undertaking, success will, in general, be proportioned to the diligence and faithfulness with which the means are employed. The parent who feels his responsibility, and labors and prays to be qualified to meet it, and carefully and diligently imparts instruction to his tender charge, and fervently seeks the Divine blessing upon them, and accompanies his efforts with a godly example in other respects, will be instrumental of their salvation. He is sowing seed in a susceptible soil; and, as surely as the husbandman reaps a harvest as the result of his toil, will a rich harvest unto eternal life be realized from the germs of truth and holiness which he deposits. He shall ultimately appear before the throne



of God, with unspeakable joy, surrounded by those for whom he has toiled and wept. On the contrary, if he is negligent, his offspring may rise into life without those impressions of truth which their state and necessities require, may pass through the years allotted them on earth without religion, and may be found on the left hand at the day of final account. This is as certain as that the neglect of means in any other department of the divine government will result in the failure of the ends which means are intended to secure. Means and ends, in the government of God, have a sure connection. And they are no more surely connected in any other department than in the moral and spiritual. Here it is more certain than in any other, that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

It follows, that whatever tends to promote faithfulness in the religious education of

children, tends to their salvation and to the promotion of piety in the world. Here, then, is my first argument for the utility of the doctrine and practice of Infant Baptism: —

*It tends to increase parental faithfulness in the religious instruction and training of children.*

No man is so ignorant of the principles of our nature as entirely to discard the use of forms. In pecuniary affairs, why is a promise or a note better than a simple purpose of the mind? and why is a written agreement better than a mere understanding? An important part of the benefit is, that the act of thus formally binding increases a sense of obligation.

On this principle — the usefulness of forms — God has dealt largely with our race from the beginning. The patriarchs and the Israelites were more likely to feel

their guilt and their desert at the divine hand when they saw the sacrifice offered to expiate their guilt, first bleeding and then smoking upon the altar, than if no such rite had been instituted. The Jewish parent, as he saw the painful ceremony which the law required, administered to his child, would be more likely to feel, than he otherwise would have been, that that child possessed a corrupt nature, which needed to be taken away, and corrupt passions and affections which it might cost painful effort to mortify and exterminate. So, under the Christian dispensation, the ordinance of the Supper was instituted, and attendance on it required, because the solemnity of the service tends to bring near to the mind, and impress on the heart, the important truths which cluster round the cross of the expiring Saviour. One reason, why the act of outwardly and solemnly covenanting with God in a

public profession of religion is a duty, is, that it tends to impress on the mind one's obligations to be God's, and to live for him in the world. The outward offering of prayer is better than the mere desires of the heart, because it tends to fix the thoughts and add intensity to the desires. Public worship is a duty, because its several forms tend to beget and foster in the soul the feelings of devotion. And he who fancies that one may be just as good a Christian without outward forms — without prayer, without public worship, without open profession and attendance on special ordinances — as with them, is astonishingly ignorant or careless or perverse. He applies a principle in the high concerns of religion which he knows to be unsound, and which he would not trust in any other department.

On the same ground of utility, which underlies other religious ordinances, do we

maintain that Infant Baptism is impressively significant and highly salutary. In this rite, the parent is solemnly reminded that in his child (so young, perhaps, as to be almost unconscious of its own existence), are wrapped the germs of immortality, that these will be developed and matured, and that heaven or hell will be the certain and amazing issue of its individual being. He is reminded of the pollution of its nature, — that from its earliest infancy it needs cleansing, and must have it, or never be admitted to heaven. He is reminded that the little creature whose very being twines so strongly around his heart is not his, but God's, — that his Creator claims it as his own peculiar property, and commits it to him to be cared for and trained with special reference to his service and kingdom both here and hereafter. He is thus reminded of his solemn responsibility — that if he is faithful in

prayer and effort — if he guides and guards and instructs, and pleads for, his now helpless offspring as he should, its usefulness and blessedness will be the happy result; and if he is negligent, disaster and ruin, here and hereafter, may be the consequence. He is also reminded of God's promised aid to his endeavors, and the certainty of success, if his efforts are made in humble and persevering faith.

Fix your eye, then, upon a parent who has recently received the precious gift of a "second self." See him bringing this object of his tenderest affection into the house of God, before a solemn assembly of worshippers, that he may consecrate it to the Lord and Saviour to whom he has given himself. The solemnity of the duty presupposes the existence of thought and prayer respecting his obligations, and the necessities and destiny of his child. He brings it

and devotes it to God, and prays for its acceptance, and for the bestowment upon it of the purifying influences of the Spirit so impressively signified by the ordinance administered. He enters into solemn covenant with God respecting that child. He pledges himself, there, in the presence of God and his people, to train and educate that child for Christ, — that the instructions he gives in any thing useful, and the privileges and advantages he procures for it, shall be with the express design of fitting it to be a good and useful subject of His kingdom. He pledges his own daily, humble, earnest, persevering prayers to God in its behalf, and that he will store its opening mind with divine truth, and surround it with motives to godliness. And he takes hold of God's covenant engagements to bless his efforts and save his child.

Now we ask, will all this have no good

effect upon a Christian parent's heart? Can he have distinctly placed before his mind, and pressed upon his heart, all the solemn truths and facts involved in this ordinance, and pass from such a scene with no increased impression of the state and necessities of his child, and his own responsibilities and duties? Will he be moved to no more earnestness of prayer by having an ordinance indicative of its true relation to the government of God, placed, as it were, at the very threshold of its being? Will he be stimulated to no more diligence of effort by thus seeing how much depends on him, and what he has solemnly engaged to do? And will his faith derive no encouragement and strength from God's promised assistance, assured to him in the covenant of which he has taken hold? To say that all this is useless, is to contradict some of the plainest principles of our nature. It is not useless.



When properly understood and performed, it cannot be. The parent, who, with a right apprehension of the nature of the transaction, and with true piety of feeling and purpose, thus consecrates his child, is benefited himself by being brought into a closer covenant relation to God, and by being rendered more faithful in duty; and the richest blessings will result to the precious object of his affection and solicitude. And to object to the utility of this ordinance by saying that the happy results, as here indicated, are seldom, if ever, fully seen, would be just as valid as to object against the Lord's supper by saying that it exerts not all the influence on Christian hearts and lives which it should. The very fact that there is ground for such an objection against Infant Baptism, shows the necessity of such an institution. It shows that parents need all the helps to faith and duty which the ordinance

involves. At best, they are apt to be forgetful and negligent. At best, too many of their children perish through their neglect. God foresaw the necessities of the case, and, in mercy to them and their offspring, instituted an ordinance most happily calculated to help their infirmities, and lead to blessed results.

2. Infant Baptism tends to procure for children the prayers and pious co-operation of the church. Few things are more solemn and impressive than to see a little infant, scarcely conscious of its own existence, publicly presented to God in this ordinance, and then to have the prayers of the whole congregation centred on the spiritual and immortal welfare of that tender and beautiful object. Who that has any sense of the worth and importance of religion, or any belief in God as a hearer of prayer, would not value an interest in such supplications

in behalf of his own children? Any Christian, surely, has few parental sympathies whose heart is not warm, and his supplications fervent, on such an occasion. And the ear of Him who said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not," must be open to such requests. Few petitions accord better with the tenderness of his nature as thus expressed, or are more sure to receive answers of peace.

But the influence of infant dedication ends not with the act or the hour of its performance. That which tends to strengthen the faith, and encourage the hope, and stimulate the effort, of individual parents, is a blessing to the church as a whole. And we hazard nothing in saying that those churches which place the highest and most enlightened estimate on Infant Baptism, pray most, and most fervently, for the children of the church. They view the offspring

of the household of faith as standing in a covenant relation to God and the church, and the body as being the depositary of promises and blessings in their behalf, and as sustaining an important responsibility respecting their character and destiny. If they see such children entering the paths of vice or error, they feel an additional inducement, and a stronger obligation, to admonish and save them from ruin. The consciences of children, too, by proper instruction may be made to feel that the fact of having been consecrated to God is inconsistent with indulgence in carelessness, folly, and sin; and imposes upon them increased obligation to second the wishes of their pious and anxious parents by consecrating themselves to Christ. And we believe that the time is coming when Christians will better understand, and more deeply feel, the duties and obligations involved in infant

dedication, and will be more faithful to Christ and his cause in this respect; and that, as a consequence, children will be converted while young; and that thus the glorious period will be introduced when "all shall know the Lord from the least to the greatest."

3. The act of giving children to God in baptism tends to soothe a parent's heart, if called to lay them in an early grave. Many a father and mother, as they have stood by the bedside of a dying child, have been quieted into sweet submission to the divine will, by remembering the consecration of it to God which they made in baptism. They then surrendered it to him, as its Creator and Sovereign; and it is his. Strong as may have been their desires for its recovery, they have felt that it belonged not to them to dictate whether he should restore or remove it. They have keenly felt the rod,

but have kissed it, and bowed, and from the heart have said, "Thy will be done."

The writer here speaks from experience. In troubles of this kind (and often has the bitter cup been put into his hand — and he cannot pen this remark without pausing for a tear over recollections of the past), he has experienced consolation from the fact of having given his children to God in baptism. At such times he has felt that the ordinance *is a blessed privilege*. When he has looked on a dying child, it has calmed an almost bursting heart to remember that the child *was not his* — that he *did surrender it to God in that specific and solemn act*. Thousands of parents have felt the same. Rightly understood and practised, the act of dedicating children to God is full of heavenly consolation. It is fraught with many advantages while children live; it yields sweet peace and comfort if they die. Eter-

nity alone can unfold what benefits it has conferred on parents; and how many children, by the influences it involves, have been rescued from sin, and raised to the felicities and honors of heaven.

Such are some of the benefits of Infant Baptism. It is infinitely too sacred and important ever to be treated with lightness. Every Christian parent should cleave to it, as of inestimable value; and he should pray for grace to realize upon himself and his offspring the fulness of its blessings.

The eyes of some, who have thus consecrated their children to God, will fall on these pages. That act, my friends, was only the commencement of your duty. In a solemn covenant transaction, you gave them to God, and solemnly pledged yourselves to a faithful endeavor to train them for Him. Think often of the engagement which you bound upon your souls, and how much it

constantly requires of you. Think much of the consequences connected with fidelity or neglect. God is faithful to his promises; and you may expect success, if you address yourselves, humbly and earnestly, to your work. The prospect of success should fire your hearts and inspire your endeavors; for, what greater blessedness can you have than to appear before the throne at length, surrounded by the objects of your tenderest affection. Thousands of children will bless God forever for the prayers and faithfulness of their parents. How delightful the thought that yours — all of them — may be of this happy number. Labor and pray, with constant and tearful assiduity, that so it may be. The blessedness of the result will more than repay all your anxiety and toil.

Multitudes of children will find their portion with “hypocrites and unbelievers,” because the unfaithfulness of their parents



suffers them to perish in their sins. The hallowed paternal influences, which would reclaim and save them, are wanting; and they go down to the abodes of darkness as the natural result of their own transgressions. Many of these, it is feared, will go from the families of professedly pious parents. Many more will go from families whose heads are not pious. Do I address any parents of the latter class? I pray you, respected friends, to remember that the same great duties grow out of the relations subsisting between you and your children, as result from those existing between the religious and their offspring. The same consequences, also, are connected with fidelity or neglect. Slumber not over the pressing necessities of your offspring. Their souls are infinitely precious; and the same agencies and influences are requisite for their salvation as are needful for that of others. If

you have any care for their immortal welfare, give yourselves to Christ, and commence the labor you have too long neglected. The connection between you and your children will be endless in its consequences. Oh, think of this. Ponder it well. There is no escaping from the solemn fact. Awake, then, to your own necessities and theirs. Pray for them. Pray with them. Instruct and exhort them, and do what you can to bring them to Christ. God may bless the effort, and give you cause of everlasting joy.

Many of the dear children who constitute our Sabbath Schools are the subjects of pious parental solicitude and care. Not a few of you, young friends, have been devoted to God in that solemn rite which we have now considered. Have you devoted yourselves? Should you not? What more reasonable than that those who have receiv-

ed so many instructions, and for whom so many prayers have been offered, should give the morning of their days to Christ? God has brought you into a peculiar relation to himself and his church, and surrounded you with many influences to draw you toward himself and heaven. Yield to their sweetly constraining power, and give your hearts to Him who died to cleanse them with his blood.

There is no more beautiful sight on earth than to see the young turning to the Lord. And if any of you have not pious parents to feel and labor for your good, the Saviour's arms are, notwithstanding, open to receive you. To you, his invitation is, "come unto me, and I will cleanse and guide and save you." There is room enough in heaven for you. There angels wait to rejoice over your repentance, and to welcome you among the followers of the Lamb. If your parents

pray not for you, pray the more earnestly for yourselves. If they care not for your souls, you should feel the deeper solicitude, and exercise the greater care yourselves. We know not how many may have felt their way alone to heaven. May the Lord enable you to reach that happy place!

E N D.

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